

(AN)
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
CAUSES of DECLENSION in RELIGION,
With the MEANS of REVIVAL;
BEING THE
CIRCULAR LETTER
FROM THE
MINISTERS and MESSENGERS
OF THE
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

Assembled at OAKHAM, May 17, 18, 1785:

Maintaining the important Doctrines of Three Persons in the Godhead; Eternal and Personal Election; the Original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind; particular Redemption; free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ; the invincible Efficacy of divine Grace; the certain Perseverance of the Saints in Grace to Glory; and the Independency of the Churches inviolably.

To the several Churches they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Sutton-Ashfield, Nottingham, Sheephead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Arnsby, Foxton, Clipstone, Oakham, Soham, Kettering, Walgrave, Northampton, Road, Olney, and St. Alban's; as also to the many Churches not yet in this Association, who, notwithstanding, countenance it, by the Attendance of their Ministers and Members:—

Grace be to you, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly beloved brethren!

THROUGH the good hand of our God upon us, we met together according to appointment, and enjoyed the pleasure of an agreeable interview with several of our dear friends and brethren in the Lord. We trust, also, that our God was with us in the different stages of the opportunity. The letters from the several churches, which were attended to the first evening of our meeting together, afforded us matter for pain and pleasure. Two of the associate churches continue destitute of the stated means of grace, others are tried with things of an uncomfortable nature, and most complain of the want of a spirit of fervour and constancy in the ways of God. Yet, on the other hand, we met with some things which afforded us pleasure. Many of our congregations are well attended; a spirit of desire after the word is, we think, upon the increase; nor are our labours, we hope, altogether in vain, as the work of the Lord, in a way of conversion, appears to be carrying on, though not in instances very remarkable.

'Tis true we have reason to bewail our own and other's declensions, yet we are not, upon the whole, discouraged. It affords us no little satisfaction to hear in what manner the *monthly prayer meetings* which were proposed

proposed in our letter of last year, have been carried on, and how God has been evidently present in those meetings, stirring up the hearts of his people to wrestle hard with him for the revival of his blessed cause. Though as to the number of members, there is no increase this year, but something of the contrary; yet a spirit of prayer in some measure being poured out, more than balances in our account for this defect. We cannot but hope, wherever we see a spirit of earnest prayer generally and perseveringly prevail, that God has some good in reserve, which, in his own time, he will graciously bestow.

But while we rejoice to see such a spirit of united prayer, we must not stop here, brethren, lest in so doing we stop short. If we would hope for the blessing of God upon us, there must be added to this *a spirit of earnest enquiry into the causes of our declensions, and an hearty desire and endeavour for their removal.* When Israel could not go forward, but were smitten by the men of Ai, Joshua and the elders of the people prostrated themselves before the Lord. In this they did well; but this was not sufficient—Get thee up, said the Lord to his servant—wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned—Up, sanctify the people—and search for the accursed thing!—This, it is apprehended, is the case with us, as well as it was with Israel; and this must be our employment as well as theirs. With a view to assist you, brethren, and ourselves with you, in this very necessary enquiry, we appropriate the present letter TO THE POINTING OUT OF SOME OF THOSE EVILS WHICH WE APPREHEND TO BE CAUSES OF THAT DECLENSION OF WHICH SO MANY COMPLAIN, AND THE MEANS FOR THEIR REMOVAL.

The *first* thing that we shall request you to make enquiry about is, whether there is not *a great degree of contentedness with a mere superficial acquaintance with the gospel, without entering into its SPIRIT and END; and whether this be not one great cause of the declension complained of.*—In the apostles time, and in all times, *grace and peace* have ever been multiplied by *the knowledge of God*; and in proportion as this has been neglected, those have always declined. If we are sanctified *by the word of truth*, then as this word is received or disrelished, the work of sanctification must be supposed to rise or fall. We may give a sort of idle assent to the truths of God, which amounts to little more than taking it for granted that they are true, and thinking no more about them, unless somebody opposes us: but this will not influence the heart and life, and yet it seems to be nearly the whole of what many attain to, or seek after.

We maintain the doctrine of one infinitely glorious God; but do we realize the amiableness of his character? If we did, we could not avoid loving him with our heart and soul, and mind and strength.—We hold the doctrine of the universal depravity of mankind; but do we enter into its evil nature and awful tendency? If we did the *one*, how much lower should we lie before God, and how much more should we be filled with a self-loathing spirit! If the *other*, how should we feel for our fellow-sinners! how earnest should we be to use all means, and have all means used, if it might please God thereby to pluck them as brands out of the burning!—We hold the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the Godhead; but do we cordially enter into the glorious œconomy of redemption wherein the conduct of the sacred Three is most gloriously displayed? Surely if we did, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost would be with us more than it is.—We avow the doctrines of free, sovereign, and efficacious grace; but do we generally *feel* the grace therein discovered? If we did, how low should

we lie! how grateful should we be! We should seldom think of their sovereign and discriminating nature without considering how justly God might have left us all to have had our own will, and followed our own ways; to have continued to increase our malady, and despise the only remedy! Did we properly enter into these subjects, we could not think of a *great* saviour, and a *great* salvation, without loathing ourselves for being such *great* sinners; nor of what God had done for, and given to us, without longing to give him our little all, and feeling an habitual desire to do something for him.—If we realized our redemption by the blood of Christ, it would be natural for us to consider ourselves as bought with a price, and therefore not our own; “a price, all price beyond!” O could we enter into this, we should readily discern the force and propriety of our body and spirit being his; *his* indeed! dearly bought, and justly due!—Finally, we all profess to believe the vanity of this life and its enjoyments, and the infinitely superior value of that above; but do we indeed enter into these things? If we did, surely we should have more of heavenly mindedness, and less of criminal attachment to the world.

It is owing, in a great degree, to this contentment with a superficial knowledge of things, without entering into the spirit of them, that we so often hear the truths of the gospel spoken of with a tone of disgust, calling them “*dry doctrines*;” whereas gospel truths, if preached in their native simplicity, and received with understanding and cordiality, are the grand source of all well grounded consolation. We know of no consolation worth receiving but what arises from the influence of truth upon the mind. Christ’s words are *spirit* and *life* to them who hunger and thirst after them, or have a heart to live upon them; and could we but more thoroughly enter into this way of living, we should find the doctrines of the gospel instead of being *dry*, to be what they were in the days of Moses, who declared, *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.** O brethren, may it be our and your concern not to float upon the surface of christianity, but to enter into the spirit of it. For *this cause* an apostle bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might comprehend the *breadth*, and *length*, and *depth*, and *height* of things; and for *this cause* we also wish to bow our knees, knowing that it is by this, if at all, that we are *filled with all the fullness of God.†*

Another thing which we apprehend to be a great cause of declension is, a *contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after* EMINENCE *in grace and holiness.*—If we may judge of people’s thoughts and aims by the general tenor of their conduct, there seems to be much of a contentment with about so much religion as is thought necessary to constitute them good men, and that will just suffice to carry them to heaven; without aiming, by a course of more than ordinary services, to glorify God in their day and generation. We profess to do what we do with a view to glorify God, and not to be saved by it; but is it so indeed? Do these things look like it? How is it too that the positive institutions of Christ are treated with so little regard? Whence is it that we hear such language as this so often as we do—“Such a duty, and such an ordinance, is not essential to salvation—we may never be baptized in water, or become church members, and yet go to heaven as well as they that are.”

It is to be feared the old puritanical way of devoting ourselves wholly

* Deut. xxxii. 2.

† See Eph. iii. 14--19.

to be the Lord's, resigning up our bodies, souls, gifts, time, property, with all we have and are to serve him, and frequently renewing these covenants before him, is how awfully neglected. This was to make a *business* of religion, a *life's work*, and not merely an accidental affair, occurring but now and then, and what must be attended to only when we can spare time from other engagements. Few seem to aim, pray, and strive after *eminent* love to God and one another. Many appear to be contented if they can but remember the time when they had such love in exercise, and then tacking to it the notion of perseverance without the *thing*, they go on and on, satisfied it seems, if they do but make shift just to get to heaven at last, without much caring how. If we were in a proper spirit, the question with us would not so much be, what *must* I do for God? as what *can* I do for God? A servant that heartily loves his master, counts it a *privilege* to be employed by him, yea an *honour* to be intrusted with any of his concerns.

If it is enquired, what then is to be done? wherein in particular can we glorify God more than we have done? We answer by asking, Is there no room for amendment? Have we been sufficiently earnest and constant in private prayer? Are there none of us that have opportunities to set apart particular times to pray for the effusion of the Holy Spirit? Can we do no more than we have done in instructing our families. Are there none of our dependents, workmen, or neighbours, that we might speak to, at least so far as to ask them to go and hear the gospel? Can we rectify nothing in our tempers and behaviour in the world, so as better to recommend religion? Cannot we watch more? Cannot we save a little more of our substance to give to the poor? In a word, is there no room or possibility left for our being more meek, loving, and resembling the blessed Jesus than we have been?

To glorify God, and recommend by our example the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, are the chief ends for which it is worth while to live; but do we sufficiently pursue these ends? Even these chief ends of our existence, are they in any good degree so much as kept in view? Ah, what have we done for God in the towns, villages, and families where we reside? Christians are said to be the *light* of the world, and the *salt* of the earth—do we answer these characters? Is the world enlightened by us? Does a favor of Christ accompany our spirit and conversation? Our business, as christians, is practically to be *holding forth the word of life*. Have we, by our *earnestness*, sufficiently held forth its importance? or by our *chaste* conversation coupled with fear, its *holy* tendency? Have we all along, by a becoming *firmness* of spirit, made it evident, that religion is no *low*, *mean*, or *dastardly* business? Have we, by a *cheerful complacency* in God's service, gospel, and providence, sufficiently held forth the *excellency* of his government, and the *happy* tendency of his holy religion?—Doubtless, the most holy and upright christians in these matters, will find great cause for reflection, and room for amendment; but are there not many who scarcely ever think about them, or if they do, it only amounts to this, to *sigh*, and go *backward*, resting satisfied with a few lifeless *complaints*, without any real and abiding efforts to have things otherwise?

Another cause of declension, we apprehend, is, *making the religion of others our standard, instead of the word of God*.—The word of God is the only safe rule we have to go by, either in judging what is real religion, or what exertions and services for God are incumbent upon us. As it is unsafe to conclude ourselves real christians because we may have such feelings as we have heard spoken of by some whom we account good men;

so it is unjust to conclude that we have religion *enough* because we may suppose ourselves to be equal to the generality of those that now bear that character. What if they be good men? they are not our standard—and what if their conversation in general be such as gives them a reputation in the religious world? Christ did not say learn of *them*, but learn of *me*. Or if in a measure we are allowed to follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, still it is with this restriction, as far as they are *followers of Christ*.

Alas, how much is the professing part of mankind governed by ill example! If the question turns upon religious diligence, as, how often shall I attend at the house of God? once or twice, on the Lord's day? or how frequently shall I give my company at church-meetings, opportunities for prayer, and such like; is not the answer commonly governed by what others do in these cases, rather than by what is right in itself?—So if it turns on *liberality*, the question is not what am I able to spare in this case, consistent with all other obligations? but 'what does Mr. *such a one* give? I shall do the same as he does.' Something of this kind may not be wrong, as a degree of proportion among friends is desirable; but if carried to too great lengths, we must beware lest our attention to precedent should so far exclude principle in the affair, as to render even what we do unacceptable in the sight of God.—So, if the question turns on *any particular piece of conduct*, whether it be defensible or not, instead of searching the bible, and praying to be lead in the narrow way of truth and righteousness, how common is it to hear such language as this—'Such and such good men do so; surely therefore, there can be no great harm in it.' In short, great numbers appear to be quite satisfied if they are but about as strict and as holy as other people with whom they are connected.

Many *ill effects* appear evidently to arise from this quarter. Hence it is, for the want of bringing our religion and religious life to the test of God's holy word, we are in general, so wretchedly *deficient in a sense of our vast and constant defects*, have *no spirit to press forward*, but go on and on, *without repentance* for them, or so much as *a thought of doing otherwise*.—Hence also there is so much *vanity* and *spiritual pride* among us. While we content ourselves with barely keeping pace with one another, we may all become wretched idlers, and loose walkers; and yet, as one is about as good as another, each may think highly of himself; whereas, bring him and his companions with him to the glass of God's holy word, and if they have any sensibility left, they must see their odious picture, abhor themselves, and feel their former conduct as but too much resembling that of a company of evil conspirators who kept each other in countenance.—Finally, To this it may be ascribed in part that so many are constantly waxing *worse and worse*, more and more loose and careless in their spirit and conduct—For those who are contented not to do better than other people, generally allow themselves to do a little worse. An imitator is scarce ever known to equal an original in the good, but generally exceeds him in the bad; not only imitating his failings, but adding others to their number. If we would resemble any great and good man, we must do as he does, and that is keep our eye upon the mark, and follow Christ as our model. It is by this means that he has attained to be what he is. Here we shall be in no danger of learning any thing amiss; and truly we have failings enow of our own, in not conforming to the model, without deriving any more from the imperfections of the model itself.

Once more,—The want of considering THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR OWN

OWN GOOD AND EVIL CONDUCT, is, *we apprehend, another great cause of declension in many people.*—It is common for people on many occasions to think within themselves in some such manner as this—“What signify *my* faults, or *my* efforts? They can weigh but little for or against the public good. What will *my* prayers avail? and what great loss will be sustained by an individual occasionally omitting the duty of prayer, or attendance on a church-meeting, or it may be, the public worship and ordinances of God? And what consequences will follow if one be a little now and then off their watch—nobody is perfect, &c. &c.” This and a great deal more such horrid atheism, it is to be feared, if a thorough search were made, would be found to lie at the bottom of our common departures from God.

If when an army goes forth to engage the enemy, every soldier were to reason with himself thus—“Of what great consequence will *my* services be? it is but little execution that I can do; it will make but very little difference therefore, if I desert, or stand neuter—there are enow to fight without me,”—what would be the consequence? Would such reasoning be admitted? Was it admitted in the case of the *Reubenites*, who cowardly abode by their sheep-folds while their brethren jeopardized their lives upon the high places in the field? Was not *Meroz* cursed with a bitter curse because its inhabitants came not forth to the help of the Lord in the day of the mighty?* If an army would hope to obtain the victory, every man should act as if the whole issue of the battle depended upon *his* conduct: so if ever things go well in a religious view, it will be when every one is concerned to act as if he were the only one that remained on God’s side.

We may think the *efforts* of an individual to be trifling; but, dear brethren, let not this atheistical spirit prevail over us. It is the same spawn with that cast forth in the days of Job, when they asked concerning the Almighty, “What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” At this rate Abraham might have forbore interceding for Sodom, and Daniel for his brethren in the captivity. James also must be mistaken in saying that the prayer of a single, individual, righteous man availeth much. Ah, brethren, this spirit is not from above, but cometh of an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God! Have done with that bastard humility that teaches you such a sort of thinking low of your own prayers and exertions for God, as to make you decline them, or at least to be slack or indifferent in them! Great things frequently rise from small beginnings. Some of the greatest good that has ever been done in the world, has been set a going by the efforts of an individual—witness the christianizing of a great part of the heathen world by the labours of a *Paul*, and the glorious reformation from popery begun by the struggles of a *Luther*.

It is impossible to tell what good may result from one earnest wrestling with God, from one hearty exertion in his cause, or from one instance of a meek and lowly spirit, overcoming evil with good. Though there is nothing in our doings from whence we could look for such great things; yet God is pleased frequently to crown our poor services with infinite reward. Such conduct may be, and often has been the means of the conversion and eternal salvation of souls; and who that has any christianity in him, would not reckon this reward enough! A realizing sense of these things would stir us all up; ministers to preach the gospel to every creature, private christians situated in this or that dark town or village, to use all means to have it preached, and both to recommend it to all around by a meek and unblemished conversation.

* Judges v. 15, 16, 23.

Again, we may think the *faults* of an individual to be trifling, but they are not so. For the crime of *Achan* the army of Israel suffered a defeat, and the whole camp could not go forward. Let us tremble at the thought of being a dead weight to the society of which we are members!—Besides, the awful tendency of such conduct is seen in its *contagious* influence. If people continue to be governed by example, as they certainly will in a great degree, then there is no knowing what the consequences will be, nor where they will end. A single defect or slip, of which we may think but little at the time, may be copied by our children, servants, neighbours, or friends, over and over again; yea it may be transmitted to posterity, and pleaded as a precedent for evil when we are no more! Thus it may kindle a fire, which if we ourselves are saved from it, may nevertheless, burn to the lowest hell, and aggravate the everlasting misery of many around us, who are flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone!

These, brethren, we apprehend are some of the causes, among many others, which have produced those declensions which you and we lament. But what do we say? Do we indeed *lament* them? If we do, it will be natural for us to enquire, "*What shall we do? What means can be used towards their removal, and a happy revival?*" If this be now indeed the object of our enquiry, we cannot do better than to attend to the advice of the great head of the church to a backsliding people.—*Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.—Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.—Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent!** Particularly,

First, Let us recollect the best periods of the christian church, and compare them with the present; and the best parts of our own life, if we know when they were, and compare them with what we now are.—A recollection of the disinterested zeal, and godly simplicity of the primitive christians, and their successors in after ages, millions of whom in Christ's cause, loved not their lives unto death, would surely make us loathe ourselves for our detestable lukewarmness! As protestants, let us think of the fervent zeal, and holy piety of our reformers—think what objects they grasped, what difficulties they encountered, and what ends they obtained! As protestant dissenters, let us reflect on the spirit and conduct of our puritan and non-conforming ancestors. Think how they served God at the expence of all that was dear to them in this world, and laid the foundation of our churches in woods, and dens, and caves of the earth! Say too, was their love to God more than need be? Is the importance of things abated since their death? Might not they have pleaded the danger and cruelty of the times in excuse for a non-appearance for God with much more seeming plausibility than we can excuse our spirit of hateful indifference? O let us remember from whence we are fallen, and repent!

As to our own lives, if we are real christians, probably we can remember times wherein the great concerns of salvation seemed to eclipse all other objects. We covenanted with God—we resigned over all to him—we loved to be his—wholly his rather than our own—we were willing to do any thing, or become any thing, that should glorify his name. And is it so now? No! but why not? what iniquity have we found in him, that we are gone away backward? "O, my people, saith the Lord, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me! Have I been a hard master? or a churlish father? or a faithless friend? Have I not been patient enough with you, or generous enough towards you? Could I have done any thing more for you that I have not done? Was the covenant you made with me a hard bargain? was it hard on your side for me to be made sin, who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in me? Were the rewards of my service such as you could not live upon? Is it better with you now than then?"—O, christian reader! pause awhile; lay aside the paper, and retire before God! reflect, and pour out thy soul before him—Say unto him, O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face! Thus, thus remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent!

But do not stop here—think it not sufficient that we lament and mourn

over our departures from God; we must return to him with full purpose of heart—*Strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die.* Cherish a greater love to the truths of God—pay an invariable regard to the discipline of his house—cultivate love to one another—frequently mingle souls by frequently assembling yourselves together—encourage a meek, humble, and favourable spirit, rather than a curious one—These are some of the things among us that are *ready to die!* To this it is added,

Do thy first works.—Fill up your places in God's worship with that earnestness and constancy as when you were first seeking after the salvation of your souls—flee from those things, which conscience, in its most tender and best informed state, durst not meddle with, though since perhaps they may have become trifling in your eyes—walk in your family, in the world, and in the church, with God always before you—live in love, meekness, and forbearance with one another—whatever your hands find you to do, do it with all your might; seeking to promote, by all means, the present and eternal welfare of all around you.

Finally, brethren, let us not forget to intermingle *prayer* with all we do. Our need of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do any thing, and every thing truly good, should excite us to this. Without his blessing all means are without efficacy, and every effort for revival will be in vain. Constantly and earnestly, therefore, let us approach his throne. Take all occasions especially for *closet prayer*; here, if any where, we shall get fresh strength, and maintain a life of communion with God. Our Lord Jesus used frequently to retire into a mountain alone for prayer; he, therefore, that is a *follower* of Christ, must follow him in this important duty.

Dearly beloved brethren, farewell! Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy—To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.

Signed in behalf of the association, by

JOHN RYLAND, jun. Moderator.

B R E V I A T E S.

Tuesday Evening we met at the usual hour, and after spending some time in prayer a Moderator was chosen, the letters from the churches were read, and minutes taken of their contents, and the opportunity concluded with prayer.

Wednesday Morning between six and seven met for prayer; four brethren engaged in the opportunity.—The public meeting began about ten. Brother Burton, of Sutton-Ashfield, prayed; after which brother Fuller, of Kettering, gave some account of the nature and design of the association. Brother Ryland, jun. of Northampton, then preached from *Ishai. xxvi. 18.* latter part. *We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.* Brother Well, of Scham, prayed, and brother Hail, of Arnsby, preached from *Psal. cxviii. 25.* *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee send now prosperity!* and concluded in prayer.

At six in the evening brother Jones, of Lincoln, began in prayer. Brother Sutcliffe, of Olney, preached from *1 John iii. 3.* *And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure;* and concluded in prayer.

Thursday morning we met again for prayer, communicating experiences, settling the business of the association fund, with some other things; and the outlines of the association letter, drawn up by our brother Fuller, were read and approved. About twelve the association was concluded in prayer by the Moderator.

State of the Churches since the last association.

Added on a profession of faith	25	Dead	23
By letter of recommendation	1	Dismissed to other churches	3
	—26	Excluded	14

Decrease 14

It was resolved, without any hesitation, to continue the meetings of prayer on the first Monday evening in every calendar month. We have heard with pleasure that several churches not in the association, and some of other denominations, have united with us in this matter. May God give us all hearts to persevere. If our petitions are not answered by any remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit, they may by a more gradual work; or if not in our time, they may in time to come; or if not at all, there is profit enough in the exercise itself to be its own reward. But God hath never yet said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.

N. B. The next association to be held at Northampton on *Wednesday* in *Whitsun-week*. Brother Fuller, of Kettering, and brother Hopper, of Nottingham, to preach; in case of failure, brother Blackshaw, of Leicester, and brother Sutcliffe, of Olney. Put up at the Angel.

29 JULY 92

MUSEUM

THE
AUTHORITY and SANCTIFICATION
OF THE
L O R D ' s - D A Y,

Explained and Enforced,

IN A

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

BAPTIST MINISTERS and MESSENGERS,

Assembled at NORTHAMPTON, *June 6, 7, and 8, 1786:*

Maintaining the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal Election; original Sin; particular Redemption; free Justification by the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness; efficacious Grace in Regeneration; the final Perseverance of the Saints, and the Independency or Congregational Order of the Churches of Christ inviolably.

To the several Churches they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Codnor, Sutton - Ashfield, Nottingham, Sheephead, Leicester, Sutton - in - the - Elms, Arncliffe, Foxton, Clipston, Oakham, Spalding, Soham, Kettering, Walgrave, Guilsborough, Northampton, Road, Olney, and St. Alban's; also many other Churches, not yet in the Association, who, notwithstanding, countenance it by the Attendance of their Ministers, and many of their Members.

Dear Brethren!

THROUGH the goodness of God, we met together at the time and place appointed; and have the felicity of being able to add, that we met in love, received pleasure and profit from our interview, and parted in peace. A moderator being chosen, one of the brethren introduced the association with prayer. The letters from the churches were then read. The contents, as usual, were various; but, on the whole, were judged to be more encouraging, than for several years back. Some indeed brought complaints of deadness in the church, and want of conversion in the congregation. May the Lord revive and build up those parts of Zion! Others contained intelligence of a more pleasing kind; a measure of prosperity being evidently enjoyed in several places. May the Lord make thankful, and keep humble! The monthly meetings of prayer, for the general spread of the gospel, appear to be kept up with some degree of spirit.* This, we hope, will yet be the case. Brethren,

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* For an account of them, see our letter for the year 1784. And brother Fuller's sermon, entitled, "The Nature and Importance of walking by Faith." Sold by Buckland, London, price 6d.